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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE: NEW NUNCIO TO SUDAN

REF: VATICAN 0012

¶1. Pope Benedict XVI has appointed 53 year-old career diplomat, Monsignor Leo Boccardi, as papal nuncio in Sudan. Boccardi replaces Archbishop Dominique Mamberti who became Secretary for Relations with States (i.e., foreign minister)

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last September. To date, Boccardi has been serving as the Holy See's representative at the OSCE in Vienna. He was concurrently accredited to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Organization for Industrial Development, and the other UN offices in the Austrian capital. Boccardi will be made an archbishop prior to taking up his position in Khartoum.

¶2. Boccardi was born in San Martino di Pensilis in southern Italy on April 15, 1953. After theological studies, he was ordained a priest in 1979 and assigned to the diocese of Termoli-Larino. Boccardi entered the Holy See's prestigious diplomatic school, the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, in 1984 and began his service as a diplomat in 1987. He has served as the Holy See's missions in Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Belgium. After a period of service at the Second Section of the Secretariat of State (Foreign Ministry) in Vatican City,

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Boccardi was appointed to his present position in 2001. The new nuncio speaks Italian, English, German and French.

¶3. Comment. Sudan, and in particular the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, is high on the Holy See's foreign policy agenda. Pope Benedict XVI made a pointed reference to the region in his January 8th "State of the World" address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See (reftel), decrying the international community's failure - "powerless for almost four years" - to protect the population and achieve a political solution. Another key issue for Boccardi when he takes up his appointment will be the systematic denial of religious liberty to Christians and other non-Muslims by the Khartoum government. End comment.

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